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MINUTES
SPECIAL EDUCATION
ADVISORY COMMITTEE

JAN. 27, 1999 ...

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MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

JANUARY 27, 1999

**URBAN
MUNICIPAL**

Present:

B. Shepard, Association for Bright Children, Chair of SEAC
J. Bishop, Trustee (arrived at 7:31 p.m.)
R. Mulholland, Trustee and Chair of the Board
S. Andersen, Hamilton and Wentworth Councils of Home and School Associations
D. Bucsis, Learning Disabilities Association of Hamilton-Wentworth
H. Bushey, CHOICES - Supporting People with Developmental Disabilities
N. Dalziel, Hamilton District Society for Disabled Children
V. Kerr Jaskiewicz, Hamilton and District Easter Seals Parent Delegate Group
B. Nabuurs, Hamilton-Wentworth Community Care Access Centre
T. Parker, Learning Disabilities Association of Hamilton-Wentworth
R. Peters, Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB)
C. Shackell, Tourette Syndrome Foundation of Canada, Hamilton Region Chapter
B. Shields, Hamilton Association for Community Living
D. Stuppel, VOICE - for hearing impaired children
C. Vidic, Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorders (ChADD)
C. Vlahovich, The Children's Aid Society of Hamilton-Wentworth
V. Wylson-Sher, Autism Society Ontario Hamilton-Wentworth Chapter, Vice-Chair of SEAC

In attendance:

M. Matier, Director of Education and Secretary of the Board
M. Botting, Superintendent of Instructional Services
N. Harper, Special Education Co-ordinator

Also in attendance:

W. Dowling, PC-21 Principals' Council
G. Moncur, Hamilton-Wentworth Principals' Association (HWPB)

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GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS

B. Shepard called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m.

2. Election of Chair/Vice-Chair

Prior to calling for nominations for the position of Chair of SEAC, M. Botting read the election procedures according to the Board's Rules of Order.

It was moved by C. Vidic: That B. Shepard be elected Chair of the Special Education Advisory Committee.

**It was moved by R. Mulholland: That the nominations be closed.
CARRIED.**

To the motion, **CARRIED.**

B. Shepard assumed the Chair and called for nominations for Vice-Chair of SEAC.

It was moved by C. Vidic: That V. Wylson-Sher be elected Vice-Chair of the Special Education Advisory Committee.

It was moved by R. Mulholland: That the nominations be closed.

CARRIED.

To the motion, **CARRIED.**

The Chair welcomed Ray Mulholland, Chair of the Board, and Judith Bishop -- the trustee representatives to SEAC for 1999. She then noted the presence of Merv Matier, Director of Education and Secretary of the Board, Cheryl Poot, Consultant - Special Education and presenter on the SEAC Parents' Guide, and Donna Peace, parent representative from Mountain Secondary School Council.

3. Approval of Agenda

It was moved by C. Shackell: That the agenda be approved as distributed.

In response to W. Dowling's query, it was clarified that there was no update on the Central Ontario Regional Office (CORO) meeting as M. Botting and N. Harper were unable to attend due to the inclement weather.

The Chair drew attention to the additional information for tonight's meeting.

There was consensus that the item on SEAC Terms of Reference -- Amendments should be placed under **Business Arising from the Minutes.**

To the motion, as amended, **CARRIED.**

4. Approval of the Minutes -- December 16, 1999

It was moved by H. Bushey: That the minutes of December 16, 1998 be approved.

CARRIED.

5. Remarks - Chair

B. Shepard thanked the members for their confidence in re-electing her as Chair of SEAC. She then shared the following short story which she got from a friend:

"A few years ago at the Seattle Special Olympics, nine contestants, all with physical or mental disabilities and, therefore, differently abled, assembled at the starting line for the 100-yard dash. At the gun, they all started out, not exactly in a dash, but with a relish to run the race to the finish and win.

All, that is, except one boy who stumbled on the asphalt, tumbled over a couple of times and began to cry. The other eight heard the boy cry. They slowed down and looked back. They all turned around and went back. Every one of them.

One girl with Down Syndrome bent down and kissed him and said, "This will make it better".

All nine linked arms and walked across the finish line together.

Everyone in the stadium stood, and the cheering went on for several minutes. People who were there are still telling the story.

Why?

*Because deep down we know this one thing:
What matters in this life is more than winning for ourselves.*

*What truly matters in this life is helping each other win, even if it
means slowing down and changing our course. Each time we stop to
assist another along the way, we ALL get a little closer to the goal.*

J. Bishop joined the meeting at 7:31 p.m.

6. Business Arising From the Minutes

SEAC Terms of Reference - Amendment

When the Director affirmed that the selection of trustees for the various Board committees, including SEAC, is held at the January initial meeting of the Board, the members agreed it would be appropriate to defer the election of the SEAC Chair/Vice-Chair after the initial meeting.

It was moved by J. Bishop: That the clause on Election of the Chair/Vice-Chair in the SEAC's Terms of Reference be amended as follows:

Election of the Chair/Vice-Chair

"At the first meeting of the Committee [in December - DELETE] following the Board's initial meeting – NEW, the members shall elect one of their members as chair and one of their members as vice-chair for a one-year term. The vice-chair shall act as the chair in the chair's absence."

CARRIED.

When J. Bishop inquired if clause 5 under Duties of the Board [*SEAC shall be provided with the opportunity to participate in the annual budget process as it relates to special education.*] is in effect, the Chair recalled the members approved a motion to this effect last year. She added that at the time there was consensus that SEAC members would always have the opportunity to attend the Board's budget deliberations.

M. Botting agreed to convey the members' sentiments to D. Grant, Superintendent of Business and Treasurer.

7. Special Education Report

a) Parents' Guide – Presentation

In explaining the development process for the SEAC Parents' Guide, C. Poot, Consultant – Special Education, noted that the Ministry of Education and Training provided the general framework for the guide and, in the course of its preparation, the language, print size and extent of usefulness were closely addressed.

C. Poot indicated that the Parents' Guide sub-committee would be recommending the distribution of the guide at the school team system meetings and its dissemination to parents at the start of IPRC and/or the modification of student placement.

Although acknowledging that our board was already past the Ministry's submission deadline of January 1, 1999 for the guide, several members expressed their preference to defer consideration of the Committee's

input, preferably at a workshop or special meeting as was done in the past for a couple of issues, e.g. the Identification Criteria for IPRCs and Interim Admission and Demission Criteria for Special Class Programs.

It was felt that the special meeting could be a workshop or informal meeting without the need for a quorum as long as the intent was to consider SEAC input on the Parents' Guide and not make recommendations for Board approval.

It was moved by V. Wylson-Sher: That a special meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee be scheduled for Wednesday, February 10, 1999 at 7:15 p.m. to receive input from the members relative to the SEAC Parents' Guide.

The members agreed to send any input they may have to C. Poot prior to the special meeting to allow her to incorporate these changes into the guide which will be sent (via priority post) to SEAC members by Monday, February 8th, at the latest.

The following suggestions for the Parents' Guide were offered during the discussion:

- ⇒ For the guide to be "user-friendly", a boxed area may be provided in a conspicuous area where the person handing it to any parent can "personalize" it by writing his/her name along with a contact phone number -- this will enhance the usefulness of the guide.
- ⇒ It may be helpful to include a glossary/index and a list of pertinent contact persons and/or system committees.

To the motion, **CARRIED**.

b) Educational Assistant Allocation Status

It was noted that this area received some relief as a result of the Board's decision last week to allocate some funding for additional educational assistant (EA) support. N. Harper advised that the EA Allocation Committee met last week and will meet again tomorrow to establish the allocation criteria as required by the Ministry and to continue assisting on the ongoing EA allocation process between now and June 1999. She alluded to the need to look at next year's allocation at this time as well.

c) Other Updates

- ⇒ N. Harper reported receiving the document on the Ministry's definition of exceptionality and commented that a quick review indicated minimal changes in terms of outdated language, e.g. replacing the term "retarded" with "developmentally challenged" which this board has already been using. Stating that additional changes are forthcoming, N. Harper affirmed that the Board can now proceed with its plan to get input from the system regarding the identification criteria. N. Harper encouraged the members to provide her with their input so she could incorporate these in the report that is going to the Board sometime in March for approval and subsequently for inclusion in the Special Education Plan.
- ⇒ M. Botting referred to a plan to arrange a "mini" CORO meeting for school boards in the horseshoe area; she agreed to bring further information as soon as details are finalized.

In response to questions, the following clarifications were provided:

- a) In the event that the parent declines a special class placement, the student remains in the home school and will have access to available resources. The parent has the right to file a written appeal for a Special Education Tribunal.

- b) Parental request for gifted testing may be facilitated through (a) the resource teacher, who can refer the student to the testing process and (b) the Association for Bright Children.
- c) The Ministry's "Over 21 Proposal" is still being reviewed by staff given the Ministry's rigid criteria and unrealistic timing.
- d) Our board has been successful with its application for funding associated with the Ministry's Tutor in the Classroom project. It was noted that the Ministry made it clear, however, that the university students involved in assisting the classroom teachers should not be perceived as substitutes for Educational Assistants.

8. Updates

(a) Members

Autism Society Ontario Hamilton-Wentworth Chapter

V. Wylson-Sher drew attention to a winter workshop where she is involved as a panel member; the theme will be "Integration of Autistic Children in the Classroom", to be held on February 2, 1999 at Chedoke-McMaster Hospital. She noted that, at this time, the workshop already has a waiting list for participants.

Learning Disabilities Association of Hamilton-Wentworth

Stating that their association provides good training for their various chapters, D. Bucsis advised of an upcoming workshop regarding Regulation 464 on February 6, 1999 at North Peel Region. This is open to non-members of the association as well.

Tourette Syndrome Foundation of Canada, Hamilton Region Chapter

C. Shackell said the association's last meeting was cancelled due to the inclement weather and will have to be rescheduled; she will provide the details at the next meeting. She added that the latest newsletter of the Foundation included an update on library books and videos available to their members/clients and a list of their services.

Noting her involvement as chair of the Family Mental Health Support Network, C. Shackell drew attention to the following upcoming workshops from various support groups:

1. "Connections for Self-Helpers" on February 18, 1999 [1:00-3:00 p.m.] and "Sharing the Caring on Thursday, March 25, 1999 [1:00-3:00 p.m.] at the Self Help Centre [contact person is Alison at 905-522-7353, ext. 300 to register].
2. "Healthstyle '99 Spring Series - Stress in a Rapidly Changing World - How to Cope", by Dr. David Posen on Wednesday, February 17, 1999 [7:00-9:00 p.m.] at the St. Joseph's Hospital, Fontbonne Building [call 573-4819, St. Joseph's Community Health Centre, for more information]. The many topics will relate to stress management for children and adults.

C. Shackell expressed her concern with the interim identification criteria, stating that the Tourette syndrome does not fit with any of the criteria outlined in the document. She will provide more information in terms of inservice needs in the area of behavioural judgement, the impact of weak parenting, decisions at IPRC and the organic nature of Tourette syndrome.

The Children's Aid Society of Hamilton-Wentworth

C. Vlahovich advised that the Social Work and Social Services Acts (which will require social work and social services jobs to be licensed) were passed for legislation in December 1998 and will be proclaimed next year. She reported further that the legislation relating to changes to health protection, early intervention and decisions regarding children's lives closed last December and there was no indication to-date on whether this will be reintroduced.

Hamilton-Wentworth Community Care Access Centre

B. Nabuurs drew the members' attention to their association's open house on Wednesday, February 17, 1999 from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. Their new address is: 310 Limeridge Road West, Hamilton.

VOICE – For Hearing Impaired Children

D. Stupple alluded to the encouraging "technology" growth at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, noting a celebration event on February 3, 1999 to highlight the hundreds of implants performed through cochlear devices.

Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorders (ChADD)

C. Vidic informed the members that the association's February meeting has been scheduled for Monday, February 15, 1999 [7:00-9:00 p.m.] at the Education Centre – Main Auditorium. The focus will be "Review of Medication Used for the Treatment of ADHD."

Board Update

J. Bishop's update included the following:

- ⇒ The Board approved the formation of the Transportation Policy Committee.
- ⇒ Transportation issues around Section 19 program and those students not being able to access some programs were resolved at Board.
- ⇒ A report on Average Class Size was recently presented to the Board. Our board was slightly higher than the Ministry's class size limit of 25 for elementary schools; however, the trustees decided not to disrupt the educational programming in order to comply with the Ministry's requirement. It was noted that, presently, our board staffs schools according to the collective agreement -- the former boards had different staffing systems. Statistics for special education classes were also included in this report. [Anyone interested in obtaining a copy of the report may contact the Minute Room.]
- ⇒ The regional steering committee for speech and language is developing its recommendations in terms of spending the funding received from the government. The focus will be on the review of proposals towards identification for speech and language.
- ⇒ Further information in terms of programming changes and potential funding for Basic Level students in secondary schools is anticipated; this could lead to creative ways of meeting these students' needs.

J. Bishop referred to a sub-committee reviewing student behaviour in school bus and encouraged SEAC representation to this committee.

B. Shields advised that the Hamilton Association for Community Living is working on the same issue with DARTS transit for their adult riders. He agreed to provide further information when available.

Hamilton and Wentworth Councils of Home and School Associations

S. Andersen reported that, in conjunction with the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations, the Hamilton Council of Home and School Association will develop and circulate a brochure outlining workshops scheduled for April 9-11, 1999, at the Royal Connaught Hotel.

Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB)

R. Peters drew attention to CNIB's "Deprivation Day" set for February 13, 1999 – participants will be blindfolded and will perform/experience everything a blind student does.

Association for Bright Children

B. Shepard indicated that the next ABC meeting will be held on Monday, February 8, 1999 at 7:30 p.m. at 7 Butty Place (Quaker Meeting House). The guest speaker will be Dr. Maggie Mamen, clinical

psychologist, who is an Ottawa-based writer on family life, raising children and how to have a happy and functional life around a special child.

Regarding the association's provincial council meeting, B. Shepard said she will provide further information after she has attended it.

(b) Special Education Plan

⇒ **Special Education Plan – Draft Philosophy (SEAC Input)**

N. Harper advised that the input received from the various departments was incorporated into the draft document. Briefly speaking on the progress of the steering committee to date, N. Harper asked the members for their input. She agreed to provide a forum to the members at the February SEAC meeting for this purpose and suggested that the committee could break into small groups to discuss any pertinent ideas/changes they may wish to include in the document. N. Harper noted the following timelines for the Special Education Plan:

- March 1999 - Consideration of the Draft document
- April 1999 - SEAC approval of the Final document
- May 1999 - Board approval and subsequent submission of the document to the Ministry

The Chair of the Board affirmed that this document could be brought before the Board for consideration and approval at the May 13th Board meeting.

Towards the conclusion of the discussion, N. Harper commented that the pertinent areas requiring SEAC consideration include the following: (a) whole IPRC process – appeal process/procedures, criteria for making applications to provincial schools; (b) Individual Education Plan (IEP) – deviation from the plan, school/peer supports, volunteer resources; (c) communication strategies; and (d) transportation issues – may be deferred to the March 1999 meeting as additional information will be forthcoming from the Transportation Department.

⇒ **Draft Range of Programs and Services (SEAC Input)**

The members agreed to communicate directly to N. Harper any changes and/or suggestions they may wish to incorporate in this document.

⇒ **Suggestions for February Meeting**

As per the members' agreement earlier, the SEAC input on the Special Education Plan – Draft Philosophy will be dealt with at the February meeting – there will be small group discussions.

⇒ **System IPRC Placement**

N. Harper advised that the waiting list for special classes is fairly small at this time. Commending the efforts of the Placement Committee, N. Harper advised that, in spite of the significant number of students requiring special class placements, only five children in the primary division are still on the waiting list. The next IPRCs will be in March/April 1999, with the exception of gifted children. The next round of system IPRCs for these students have been tentatively set for the first week of June 1999.

At this point, the meeting recessed for a ten-minute break.

⇒ **Committees**

Parents' Guide Committee

See discussion under item 6, Special Education Report.

Gifted Review Committee

In briefly updating the members on the progress of this committee, B. Shepard highlighted the following:

- The Gifted Review Committee has been divided into sub-committees which have their own specific focus of review.
- In spite of the considerable differences between the former boards' gifted programs, efforts are progressing to bring both approaches together.
- The low costs of the Gifted programming require only a small proportion of the special education budget as this program does not require special equipment and resources.
- The sub-committees are presently looking at the myths and realities surrounding gifted education, budget, screening and identification, future gifted programs and appropriate venues for these as well as the overall impact statement relating to the ramifications of educating gifted students appropriately.
- The Gifted Review Committee is developing recommendations in the area of screening, formal identification, the modifications required on the program (e.g. proposal that screening begins at Grade 4 level), the need for good programming resources, retention of special classes and the integration of the former County Board students.

Affirming the Gifted Review Committee's efforts towards developing cost effective and appropriate support for gifted students, B. Shepard advised that the draft document outlining the review and recommendations of the committee will be submitted to Executive Council.

Although he commended the work of the review committee for gifted programming, B. Shields felt that our Board should promote a perception of fairness by providing "equal attention" for all exceptionalities. Noting his association is representing quite a large number of exceptional people at this time, B. Shields expressed his wish for SEAC to discuss the issue of process relating to this area at a future meeting.

Early Learning Advisory Committee

T. Parker advised that a report on early learning programming (with recommendations), including the review on the implementation of the junior kindergarten programming in County schools, will be brought to the Board in March 1999 for consideration and approval.

9. New Business**Presentation to the Board in the New Year**

As they intend to look into different ideas regarding how SEAC can make an effective presentation before the Board, the members agreed to defer this item to the February meeting.

Budget for SEAC

N. Harper reported that, based on submission made on behalf of SEAC, the budget for such things as lamination and printing received approval.

Covering Letter for SEAC Flyer

Deferred to the February meeting.

Interim Identification Criteria

Deferred to the February meeting.

Vocational Programs

B. Shepard drew attention to the letter (see Item 10) from Mountain Secondary School Council regarding the issue of school closures. With the members' permission, the Chair called on D. Peace, parent representative from the School Council, to speak on the issue.

In conveying the Council's concerns on the potential impact of the school closure plans on Mountain and Parkview Secondary Schools, D. Peace highlighted the uniqueness of vocational programming, particularly the profound effect on special needs students in these schools. She requested SEAC make a submission to the Board and ask the trustees to review and make decisions on vocational school program in an objective manner.

In response to questions, the following clarifications were provided:

- To date, the Board has not made any decision regarding school closures. To encourage community input, school zone review committees were established to look at the issue of school closure in terms of accommodation – school capacity, surplus space and boundary changes. These committees are expected to bring their recommendations to the Board for September 1999. At that time, the Board will decide on whether to be involved with school closure or consolidation of schools or to consider alternative programs.
- The Alternative Education Committee was formed to look at the best method of delivery for basic education. There is representation to this committee from all 19 secondary schools in the system, including vocational teachers.

The members agreed that SEAC should have representation to the Alternative Education Committee.

Noting his involvement with the committee, R. Mulholland expressed his willingness to represent SEAC, relay the members' concerns as well as bring regular updates from the discussions at this committee. He will also provide the members a list of the committee's meeting dates.

If her schedule permits, S. Andersen expressed interest in attending some of the meetings of the committee.

The members suggested providing a copy of the letter from Mountain Secondary School Council to the Alternative Education Committee.

When W. Dowling noted that the letter was addressed to the Director and asked if the trustees had dealt with this as part of Board correspondence, the Director said he would have to check as he was not sure if he had seen the letter.

The Committee lost a quorum at 10:27 p.m. It was agreed that the outstanding agenda items would be dealt with at the next regular meeting.

10. Correspondence

Letter from Mountain Secondary School Council

A copy of the letter was distributed to the members at the meeting (see attached).

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:30 p.m.

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Att.

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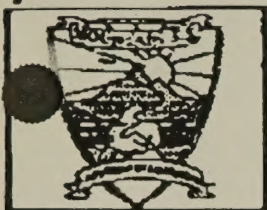
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**Mountain Secondary School**

60 Caledon Avenue
Hamilton, Ontario L9C 3C8

FAX (905) 388-0510
PHONE (905) 388-2521

December 4th, 1998.

The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board
100 Main Street West
HAMILTON, Ontario
L8N 3L1

Attention: Mr. Merv Matier, Director of Education and
Secretary of the Board

Dear Mr. Matier,

RE: Proposed School Closure of Mountain Secondary

We are writing to you as members of the School Council of Mountain Secondary School to express our shock and dismay over last month's announcement regarding the proposed school closures in Hamilton. In particular, our concern is centered on the fact that Mountain Secondary along with Parkview, the only remaining vocational schools in the city designed to meet the needs of a unique population, were being considered for closure.

In reviewing the Accommodation Review Report of October 22nd, 1998, we are encouraged with the list of factors that are being considered in deciding whether or not schools should be closed. These factors, include efficient and effective use of resources, a sense of community, safety, positive learning environment and accessibility issues. With these considerations in mind, we believe that the alternative to a separate vocational school, i.e., a program in a composite school and the 'school within a school' model are not viable for several reasons.

The students who attend Mountain Secondary School are 'exceptional' for reasons related to their special learning abilities and challenges. We believe that, by placing these students in a composite high-school or in a 'school within a school', they would be placed with peers from whom they differ greatly in terms of their social and intellectual abilities and needs. This would immediately place many of our students at a disadvantage. The current model at Mountain Secondary provides them with a level playing field where they feel safe competing with their peers. Such an environment enhances their chances of achieving success and excellence at this very vulnerable age.

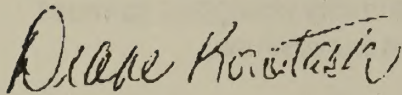
Further, successful delivery of programs to our students consists of, among other factors, staffing, curriculum and setting. The effectiveness of the present staffing and programs will be severely compromised, and detrimental to many of our students if separate school model is abandoned.

It is, in summary, the combination of unique staffing and curriculum in a distinct setting which engenders the success of the vocational programs.

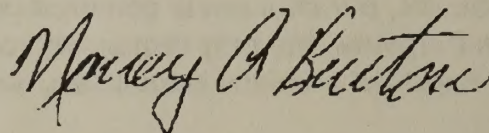
The School Council of Mountain Secondary would like the opportunity to discuss the matters outlined above more fully with Dr. Bond and Mr. Waters. We hereby extend an invitation to our next meeting on Tuesday January 19th, 1999, at 7pm in our Library. Please contact Mr. Hutton by January 12th, confirming your attendance.

The council shares with the Board the sentiments expressed in the Accommodation Review Report which speaks to enhancing the efficient use of resources that will serve to provide a safe environment conducive to learning on behalf of all students.

Sincerely,



Diane Korotash
Co-Chair
School Council

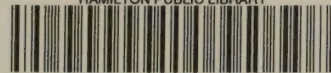


Nancy Burton
Co-Chair.
School Council

cc: Student Council
Mr. D. Hutton
Ray Mulholland, Chairman of the Board
Dr. Elizabeth Bond, Superintendent of Education
Ken Waters, Superintendent of Education
Lee Currie, Principal, Parkview Secondary School
SEAC
LDAO



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